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## A Multimodal Analysis of Qawwali: From Ecstasy to Exotic Trance

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## A Multimodal Analysis of Qawwali: From Ecstasy to Exotic Trance

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores qawwali from emotional, aesthetic as well as devotional aspects to get its true feel. The purpose is to trace the extent to which qawwali acts as a catalyst for ecstatic or trance-like states of spiritual experience. A multimodal framework for analysis was used to study the common emerging patterns like love of God and His last prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), beatitudes of God and paradox of spiritual or worldly love. The qawwali sung at the three famous shrines of Lahore, Pakistan was the main source of data. To trace its impact, perceptions of devotees were taken into account in the form of 16 case studies. It was found that qawwali's emphatic rhythmical stress patterns repeating God's name stirred devotees' emotions for spiritual self-repositioning. But words fall short to capture these spiritual emotions. Hence, this study only described the emotions supposedly gaining spiritual proximity with God.

**Keywords:** qawwali, aesthetic, devotional, emphatic, rhythmical stress, spiritual self-repositioning

### Introduction

*Qawwali* has gained much admiration and significance in the Oriental culture for many reasons. One of them is taking its devotees from ecstasy to an exotic trance in adoring the divine. This ecstasy can range from a rhythmic moving of the head, dreamy dancing, to extremes such as violent convulsions of the body, depending on the person affected (c.f. Bhattacharjee and Alam 2012, 218; Siddiqui 2009, 55; Jawed 2005, 12 and Kabbani 2004, 3). *Qawwali*'s emotional, aesthetic as well as devotional appeal develops an urge in everyone to have its feel. In order to capture the essence of *qawwali*, certain aspects, which enhance the powerful emotions in devotees, were put under consideration. This involved the philosophic rendering of *qawwali* verses and semiotic signs of hand clapping complemented by *harmonium* and double-headed *dholak* which generate inebriation in *qawwali* singing (Khan 2009, 309).

*Qawwali* was performed at shrines from where it became a popular musical genre in Pakistan and India (Newell 2007, 144). This was mainly because it included the love for prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and yearning of man for the proximity with the Divine (Sabra 2013, 245; Qureshi 2012, 470; Frembgen 2012, 567; Brewster 2011, 433; Platteau 2011, 67 and Abbas 2010,

6). It is considered that *qawwali* instills in the devotees a feeling to liberate themselves from persistent everyday routine life worries and takes them into another world. It is a world which is usually unknown to the devotees. This emotional proximity with the Divine is not due to the genre only, but it is something beyond that. In order to know the strength of *qawwali* as a musical genre, the famous shrines of Lahore were considered important sites for study.

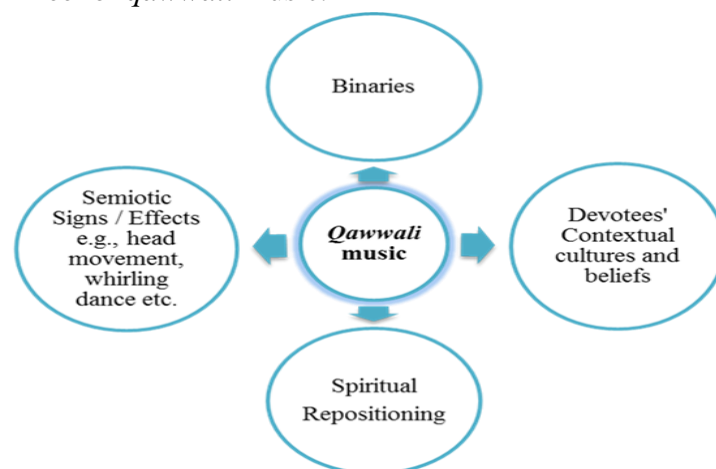
This study aims to trace the extent to which *qawwali* acts as a catalyst for ecstatic or trance-like states of spiritual experience. Furthermore, the study investigates the factors responsible for a spiritual transformation by devotees' communion with the divine. In this way, the study will explore whether it is the power of words, or the Sufi philosophy, or the music itself that can be held responsible for the devotees' self-repositioning for internal spiritual power.

## Methodology

The present study used qualitative research design to examine shrine *qawwali* in relation to devotees' perceptions to trace the musical effect of *qawwali*. The rationale behind this method was that mostly, perceptions or feelings, specifically spiritual ones, are inherent in nature, which can be examined through opinions along with expanded discussions with devotees (c.f. Creswell 2013).

## Theoretical framework

Keeping in view the multimodal framework for *qawwali* analysis, the present study explores *qawwali* as a genre that inculcates the common emerging themes like love of God and His last prophet (Muhammad P.B.U.H), beatitudes of God, paradox of spiritual or worldly love, etc. As it is shown in Figure 1, to trace the essence of *qawwali* as a genre, certain factors were studied to capture the maximum feel of *qawwali* music.



**Figure 1:** Multimodal Framework for *Qawwali* Analysis

The binaries (e.g., spiritual/worldly love, union/separation of lover-beloved and eternity/temporality etc.) were deconstructed to explore the acceptance and negation of the same

thing in *qawwali* narrative and its relevance to ignition of emotions and connection to God. But this *qawwali* phenomenon is more than deconstruction as it guides the devotees into individual variations of spiritual experience (c.f. Chaudhary 2010; Veer 2002; Rhi 2001). The devotees' verbatim was interpreted to contextualize their cultural beliefs along with feelings of *qawwali* upon them. It is not simply the words and their unequivocal connotations that make *qawwali* significant, but it is the "inner charm" (Qureshi 1986, 59), the internal sense of what its lyrics denote, that is crucial to the experience of *qawwali*. It is therefore one of the fundamental claims of this study that *qawwali* uses the musical figurative representations in the form of contrasting concepts of the inner meaning of *qawwali* experience. These symbolic depictions are kinds of musical communication that cajole the listener to turn inward by reflecting the desired personal conditions through *qawwali*'s evocative vibrations. The words cannot capture the emotions and devotees' connection with God for spiritual repositioning but it is a humble attempt to describe the essence of devotees' emotions. Linked with this, the visible semiotic signs (e.g., moving heads and dancing bodies etc.) were noted to explore *qawwali* and its implication on one's self.

### *Data collection*

The data collection process comprised of 16 case studies from fieldwork and used parts of *qawwali* verses as a source of interviewing devotees for its impact. The impact of *qawwali* was to examine *qawwali*'s coaxing power in the three Muslim shrines of Lahore. The data was collected from the three shrines: the shrine of a Sufi saint, Abul Hassan Ali Hajvery near the Bhati Gate into Lahore's Walled City, the shrine of Mian Mir located in the town of Dharampura, Lahore and the shrine of Shah Hussain Faqir located at the Baghbanpura precincts, next to the Shalimar Gardens Lahore.

### *Sample and demographics*

The sample was based on *qawwali* excerpts sung at shrines. It also included devotees (between 16 and 50 year age groups) belonging to different walks of life. They were residing both in the urban as well as the rural areas of Lahore and came to the shrine to experience *qawwali*. For example, businessmen, students, governments employees, daily wagers, factory workers, housewives, housemaids and vendors. For the case study on *qawwali* listeners, the sample distribution is shown in table 1. One of the reasons for selecting this population was to validate the study findings with gauging the musical effects of *qawwali* in a real life situation.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Sample

Sufi Shrines	Qawwali listeners	Gender
Data Ganj Bakhsh	6	M= 3, F=3
Madho Lal	4	M=2, F=2
Mian Mir	6	M= 3, F=3
Total	16	M=8, F=8

A pilot study was also conducted by taking two in-depth interviews; one from a male and one from a female devotee listening to *qawwali* at the shrine. After getting feedback from pilot

testing, questions incorporating *qawwali* excerpts being sung live in the shrine were incorporated to measure their comprehension tendencies of *qawwali* as a genre and the related effects of spiritual transmogrification. Thus, pilot testing helped the researcher to recognize the ambiance and normative structure of *qawwali* practice in the aforementioned shrines.

### *Nature of the data*

The data was based on excerpts from *qawwali* sung at shrines. It also included devotees' verbatim on *qawwali* taken from 16 in-depth interviews. These shrines were visited frequently to come into contact with the devotees. At the time of *Urs* (death anniversary of the Sufi Saint), Data Darbar was visited. Open ended questions in the form of topical and motivational probes were set as a parameter for interviews to explore the devotees' perception towards *qawwali* as Sufi text and as a source of soothing music (Heigham & Croker 2009). Topical probes covered sub-emerging themes to elaborate on the main theme of the mystic aspect of *qawwali*'s musical effects. Spiritual satisfaction is central to the essence of *qawwali* sung at shrines (e.g., Brewster 2011; Levin 2008; Pirani et al. 2008; Pfleiderer 1988; Glik 1988). However, this spiritual or mystic aspect associated with *qawwali* singing cannot be precisely measured (Astin, Astin & Lindholm 2011, 39-45). This spiritual link may only be comprehensible by observing the physical state of devotees and how their religious inclinations is linked with deriving spiritual energy of the divine through its rhythm corresponding to their head and body movements. Can (1995) also viewed the shrines' *qawwali* in terms of "The secret behind these melodies that have had us captivated for years are the sounds and words that are taken from the hearts threshing with guidance of spiritual feelings and have been arranged in certain order, strung up like rosary beads" (264). Khan and Sajid (2011) also observed the "spiritual healing" (1) in respect to stress management of the people listening to Sufi music of shrine at Barrilla Sharif, Gujrat, Pakistan.

Keeping in view the local culture of Lahore as well as for the convenience of the devotees listening to *qawwali*, the questions were asked in the Urdu and Punjabi languages according to their understanding (e.g. Does *qawwali* connect you to Allah? How far do you gain spiritual connection with Allah? Do you understand the meaning of *qawwali*? and How far does *qawwali* emotionally trigger you for spiritual self-repositioning). These questions further helped capture the devotees' verbatim perceptions about *qawwali*. Based on auditory transcriptions of the interviews, perceptions of the devotees were qualitatively analyzed. The researcher adopted a multimodal approach to analyze *qawwali* music in the light of the common emerging patterns in its poetic verses.

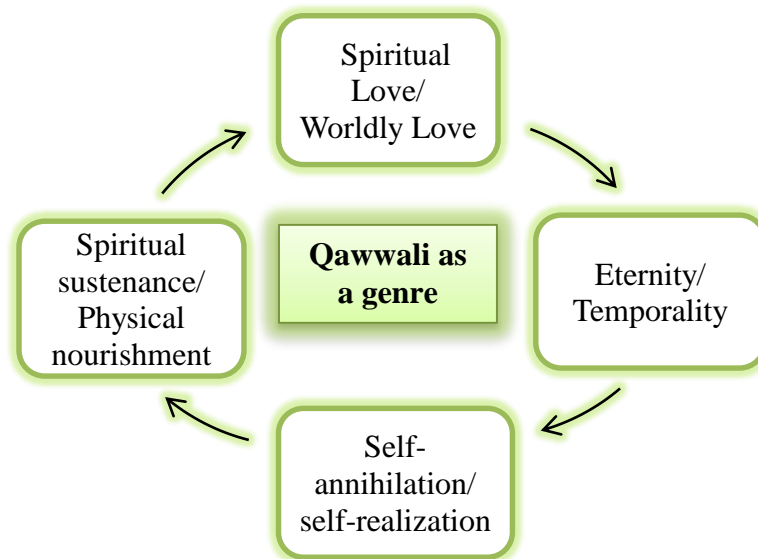
### *Ethical considerations*

This study adhered to the standard ethical guidelines of collecting data proposed by Benedek (2012). An application was submitted to the Auqaf and religious affairs committee for the provision of a representative to serve as gatekeeper in lieu of security conditions in order to conduct this study. The principles of permission, honesty, trust and anonymity were taken into account while conducting research on devotees. The identities of the devotees were kept anonymous with

the promise of not disclosing their names. It was ensured that the interview procedure did not hinder other visitors' performance of religious rituals. In this regard, an attempt was made to conduct these interviews with the devotees listening to *qawwali* in an area a little away from the prayer place. So, there was no conflict of interest involved in this process. Furthermore, the devotees were informed about the purpose of the study and their willingness to participate in the research was our foremost priority. It was made clear to them that if they felt any kind of reservation or annoyance at any point, they were not forced to continue recording their feelings for the *qawwali* as Sufi literary genre. Accordingly, three devotees quitted as they were accompanied by their families including infants and they had to leave the place (shrine) earlier. Apart from that they were not given any financial incentives for getting themselves recorded. Benedek (2012) is of the view that research pertaining to spiritual and religious studies must conform to the above mentioned parameters.

### Data analysis

The multimodal framework helped answer two research questions (a) To what extent does *qawwali* act as a catalyst for ecstatic or trance-like states of spiritual experience?, and (b) To trace the influence of *qawwali* verses' power, the underneath Sufi philosophy or the music itself upon devotees' for their self-repositioning of internal spiritual power in their routine lives' worries.



**Figure 2:** *Qawwali* as a Catalyst for Ecstatic or Trance-like Transformation

### Spiritual love / worldly love

The *qawwali* *Allah Milayaa Hunn Aaee Vaari, Hunn Viccharan Hoa mahaal Ny Maira Piyaa Gher Ayaa* (O friends, the Redeemer have saved me! With what torment my chance has emanated! Now it is difficult ever to abandon Him) refers to man's meeting as well as the departure with his beloved. The merging of Beloved and lover in Him again brings to light the state of union. The idea of separation is full of pathos that Madho forgets all candidness in such a way that he denies

his own existence by changing himself into beloved (*ranjha jogi mai jogiani*). It is important for Sufi to annihilate oneself in order to find the Maker. The repetitive sound of the word *Ranjha* was increased with the loud beat of the double reed drums to deliver the concept of union with the beloved. His unity with the beloved is physical and temporary (in one sense) and then the very next moment, he is forced to leave Him for perfect communion in the world hereafter. The binary of union / separation comes to play within these verses. The divine love is juxtaposed against physical love to distinguished between two lovers; worldly and spiritually. It was observed that the repetitive use of the word *aaya* (come) along with the rising and falling intonation evokes the real coming of beloved. A few devotees comprising of unmarried girls linked the *qawwali* music to the music of their marriage and God would help them from above the heaven. The transportation quality of *qawwali* with references to verses *Allah Milayaa* (Allah's will for our meeting) provided them with the hope of finding a better spouse. By listening to divine poetry such as *qawwali*, their chances of acceptance by the wooers get higher. In this *qawwali* acted as a way and blessing for their marriage with the man they are in love with. One woman *qawwali* listener said:

*"I have been visiting data darbar for two year. Whenever I had some family problem, I came and listened to qawwali sung here and got mentally relaxed. Now I have come to this darbar, to pray for my daughter's marriage. Furthermore, my son's exams are nearby and so with the sadqa of the qawwali sung here, these qawwali verses in the form of mannat (special prayer) will do miracles for our family."*

The devotees mostly reported that they listened to *qawwali* to get inner peace and tranquility. In addition to the provision of motivation for need satisfaction, the *qawwali* music acts as a source of spiritual strength. It was observed that when the researcher happened to come across a number of devotees who concerned themselves with God through the power of music. By listening to divine music, they remain away from the evil deeds prohibited by God Almighty. They attentively listened to the *qawwali* hymn and avoided lethargy because they considered them sacred words of Allah. Can (1995) quoted Mathnawi verses from Diwan-i-Kabir:

*"There is a sense where Allah is felt, understood and heard, but it is not a sense from this world. That sense is a different feeling, a different way of seeing."*

*Qawwali* for a majority of the devotees has become an expression of yearning for God. The listeners' enchantment with the *qawwali* is due to the divine echo prevailing in it. Like the Pythagoreans, *qawwali* is celestial marvel where the *dhamals* (dances) of *whirling dervish* is linked to the revolution of planets round its orbit. The researcher met one devotee who was totally enchanted by the *qawwali* and only through his physical gesture; it came to the forefront that the *qawwali* transported him to another world. The others sitting beside him called him by the name



of *majzoob* due to his trance-like state at Data Darbar *urs*. According to Rumi only those in real love with God possess the heart's ear that reaches the essence of the meaning of *qawwali*. In other words, not everyone could hear the divine meaning into *qawwali* (as cited in Lings 2005; Chittick 2001). Can (1995) once said:

*"If everybody had the ear to hear the divine sounds that come from the unseen realm, than divine inspiration wouldn't have come to the Prophets from the sky".*

At another occasion, *Tahirü'l-Mevlevî*, also expressed about music in his note of *Mathnawi*:

*"When an ordinary person listens to music, he likes the various tones, and that is all that the pleasure consists of.*

*But, when a knowing person hears the music, he listen to it \differently and hear different things. He feels and understands real meanings that we cannot."*

### **Eternity / temporality**

The repetitive use of the line *Day Dei Meray Maulaa* and the reciting tone in this *qawwali* refers to seek enlightenment in the darkness of the sins committed in one's life. The musical pitch variation got intensified in the verse *Mein Tau Wust Bi Hun, Mein Hakeer Bi Hun/ Tu Buland Bhi Hai, Tu Azeem Bhi Ha* (I am ordinary and mean and ignorable. You are grand and ultimate) and the recitation tone emphasized God's greatness parallel to man's position as base and low creature. A number of paradoxes; supreme / low, human / divine and creator / created, temporality / eternity in this *qawwali* emphasize the ugliness of the life in this world. To enlighten him and plunge him out of the abysmal of darkness is the foci of *qawwali*. Some of the devotees who came to the shrine reported that they attribute listening *qawwali* as a pathway for divine help. On inquiring the reason for ascribing such importance to *qawwali*, they elaborated how serenity infused their spirit when their wish regarding their children's academic performance came true. Thirteen devotees reported that listening *qawwali* as God's hymn would make their financial problems go away and bring them job opportunities and great riches. One of them visited the shrine again just because of how *qawwali* words had a magical effect on his life. The *qawwali Beqasaun Kay Madadgar* (redeemer of downtrodden) has been regarded as a way to their affluence as well as a means to gain higher social status and inner peace. The repetition of the name / word *Nabee* in lyrics of shrine *qawwali* symbolizes nearness to Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H).

Instead of focusing on the pleasures of the world hereafter due to Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) who is actually superior, the *qawwali* laid stress on man's sinful life in this world devoid of his prophet's love. The paradox of perfect / imperfect in forms of *karim* / *hakir* and *Rahim* / *wast* highlights the nothingness of man in contrast to the Prophet's grant of everything (blessing)



to man. The *qawwali* expresses love for the prophet. According to Sufism, when listening to *qawwali*, it is through Hazrat Muhammad's teachings that one can gain proximity with the divine. The continuous beat of kettledrums with the recitation tone on the words *karum kaakaro shukar* stressed Prophet's gift of blessing on man. Even the intonation varied on different levels when *Mustafa* (muus-taa-faa) was pronounced rhythmically on the recitation tone.

### **Self-annihilation / self-realization**

The opening verses of *qawwali* sung at Data Ganj Bakhsh *dum must qualander, mustt mustt*, (intoxicated in every breath) have dual meanings of life and annihilation. *Mustt* is repeated thrice or more to show man's transformation as someone who is lost in another dominion of life. The intoxication in the love of God makes him forgetful of the life in this world. The *qawwali* invites to attention the two binaries of spiritual communion and worldly abandonment in adopting a *qualander* way of life representative of a mystic.

Another verse of *qawwali* exposes the barrier between lover and beloved in the form of another binary that is *perda / jalwaa* (veil / unveil or disclosure) There is nothing in between them for reunion and communion with the divine. It was observed during listening that the variations in the recitation tone were utilized to induce sensation of the sublime. The musical pitch variation was found on the word *perda* (veil) around which the entire melodic verse gravitated. This metaphorical image of the wall as presented in the lyric was even not able to separate them, diminishing the line such that lover / beloved become one. The annihilation of self is presented in *Aaj Hum Tum Nahee Ghair Koi* (Today we are not unknown to each other) and the presence of absent beloved is conveyed playfully through the words *Shab-ai-wassul* (on the nocturnal of the unification). There is no possibility for physical oneness with God, instead spiritual unification has taken place in the below *qawwali* excerpts sung at Mian Mir shrine.

A majority of the visitors reported that *qawwali* made them mentally relaxed and they were satisfied with the peace of mind they got through it. In case of any problematic issue going on in their life, *qawwali* had a medicinal effect on their bodies. A 37 year old devotee, who was a salesperson by profession, said that whenever he had some loss in his business, he came to the shrine and listened to the music and his tensions would go away. According to him, it was not just music. It carried with it the words of God; so he felt the need to repeat the *qawwali* verses in order to get the full meaning linking himself to God. Spirituality was brought to *qawwali* by the periodic chanting of *Allah Hoo* (O Allah) between verses, which became a signature to shrine *qawwali* as a musical genre. He confessed that he had the habit of indulging in fraudulent activities while selling products to customers. So, the *qawwali* helped him to redeem himself of his sins as he was continuously asking for forgiveness. Many researchers (e.g., Xu 2016; Abu-Raiya & Pargament 2011; Al-Houdalieh 2010) viewed spiritual music as religious process of self-awareness.

### **Spiritual sustenance / physical nourishment**

The love for the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is embedded within *qawwali*. The *qawwali* elaborates the lover's role as a beggar, yearning for the Prophet Muhammad's help. He is not only

begging for physical nourishment but for the spiritual sustenance and redemption as well. The reciting tone varies with the word *bherrdau* (fill up) in order to intensify the meaning of the other word in the lyric, that is, *jholi* (lap) which is not taken in its literal sense, but it shows that Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) never let go of any one empty of his love. All binaries in form of empty / full, helpless / helpful and coming / going all seem to be implicit in one verse.

The *qawwali Bher dau Jhauli, Bher Dau Jhauli Mairii Yaa Mohammad / Laut Ker Main Naa Jauun Gaa Khaalee* (Fill my lap, O Muhammad / I will not go back unrewarded and barehanded) worked as a light of God for the female participants and acted as an intermediary to God and consequently led to the acceptance of their wishes. A lady referred to *qawwali* as pure blessing in the form of son after 4 sons. As long as they sit in the shrine and listen to its music, they remain protected by God. Hence, listening to *qawwali* served as a prayer on their behalf to God. The meaning of *jholi* was equated with the birth of a child in their context and the recitation tone stressed on the word *bher dau jhauli* to emphasize the meaning of lap (*jholi*).

The findings further manifested that *qawwali* music healed the patients and provided them not only with the spiritual awakening but with the physical vigor as well. Idara Naqash Bandia (2009) is of the view that “Spiritual strength constitutes the strongest defense against sickness and the means towards achieving higher states of health and well-being” (121). According to him, the music has healing power infused in it. While listening to *qawwali* and eating sugar or having *dam wala pani* (sacred verses read on water), the devotees affirmed their belief in getting healed from chronic diseases like hepatitis and tuberculosis. It was observed that their bodies were swaying along with the rhythm of the *qawwali* and they blew those *qawwali* verses on water to avoid such diseases. For them, good health is attained while listening to the *qawwali*. It is not entertainment but a kind of therapeutic medicine for the firmness of the human body and soul. Lajwani, Memon and Jarwar (2015) elaborated the physical effects of spiritual music. The repetition of the words *Maula* (Allah) does miracles for them. It was found that music, like water, has relevance to spiritual purity. *Qawwali* music in the shrines has influence of this kind. Even the scientists demonstrated the benefits and miracles of music on learning abilities and cardiac problems. It is no longer a mystery that illnesses are cured through music (Artiran 2014, 277-285). So, the hearing that is talked about is not just sounds that they listen to with the ears, but divine music penetrated through the hearts entranced by God’s harmony and grace. The findings of the study define spirituality as strong faith in God and asking for His help in trouble by the *qawwali* listeners. It is sustained in studies conducted by Noguchi et al. (2006); Penman et al. (2009) and Rahemi (2006) who have interconnected *qawwali* and religion to support spirituality as God’s will. Some of the *qawwali* listeners came to relax themselves and managed to get rid of their stresses of life. A listener of about 45 years old, described her feelings as:

*“Qawwali music (Har than wichishqsamaya) reflected the angels chanting. This is not music played on TV but it has something of mystic quality. A voice of Allah coming from the skies. A divine*

*sound. These sweetest melodies are the praises of Allah and the Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W).*

It is clear from her perception that spiritual delight and pleasure is received from the music of *qawwali*. For Semazen, music is symptomatic of Allah's voice in Mathnawi (as cited in Can 1995, 731).

In short, *qawwali* as a genre has been instantiated here to bring meaning from its melodious verses. The forms of Sufi texts, specifically *qawwali*, in the present study legitimizes in guiding man towards his goal. The researcher's purpose was to let the common themes of *qawwali* express themselves through music. To achieve divine glory and love is the peak triumph and difficulties in its accomplishment are the essence of mystic element (Chittik 2000). *Qawwali* is replete with contrasting metaphors of sacrilegious love resembling worldly romantic poetry. Here the beloved God and human as a mystic is shown in a female caricature isolated from her lover by delusion. *Qawwali* refers to *jogi* as lover of this world involving the play with trace *mai jogiani* in order to attain the Beloved. The merging of lover and beloved is constantly into play in the *qawwali* genre but it is seemingly impossible. However, the intended meaning is the sacrifice of oneself or one's identity in achieving the real or the Divine love (Schimmel 1975).

The concept of knowledge is linked to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Jeniffer (2013) views the idea of "perfect man" in the Prophet as role model in uniting God and the universe. The *qawwali* contains inter-textual references with "a stamping of the Quran and Hadith under it" (Shams-i-Tabrizi in his book *Mulaqat*).

Hence, the paradoxes and contrasting metaphors epitomize *qawwali* as a poetic genre and its music transports to the state of joy. The foundational values of this world that lead to unstable meanings or reality are questioned. To detach from a solid identity and move away from the unsubstantiated reality, *qawwali* acts as a gateway into the realm of the unfamiliar (larger reality). The familiarity of the unfamiliarity is the crux behind *qawwali* as a genre. The interplay of binaries in *qawwali* can be regarded as a humble attempt to express the unimaginable (Wilcox 2011).

## Conclusion

Words fall short to capture the spiritual emotions of the devotees. So, the words used in this study only described the emotions gaining spiritual insight but perhaps the real essence of those emotions that grappled the hearts and minds of devotees at the shrines are difficult to describe in words. The utilization of the figurative import of human love as an exhibition of spiritual passion is the kernel and soul of *qawwali*. The findings from the observations revealed that the *qawwali*'s emphatic rhythmical stress patterns repeating God's name (*Allah Hoo*) stirred the souls of shrine visitors and guided them towards ecstasy. *Qawwali* as a musical genre exemplified nearness to the Divine reality by making use of binaries and paradoxes between divine / human, permanence / transience, spiritual / physical, creator / created and presence / absence. But the feel of *qawwali* is more than deconstruction of binaries within *qawwali* verses. A few of the devotees were observed to be

enjoying *qawwali* and taking it as an entertainment. It was a kind of sightseeing to them as they were found dancing along with the *qawwali*. Hence, *qawwali* as a product of popular culture and religious wisdom has performed certain functions for its devotees at the selected sites. Sometimes it was music alone that attracted the devotees. For some, the textual units or words of *qawwali* transcended their ordinary worldly existence by tendering the flame of spiritual love. Only one man at the time of *Urs* at Data Ganj Bakhsh shrine was found whirling and dancing on the rhythms of *qawwali*. This study further suggests investigating the effect of music on the viewers by deconstructing *filmi qawwali* or *techno-qawwali* while moving out of the shrine precincts that marked the beginning of *qawwali* as an entertainment

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